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JAMES ATLEE'S Imitation British **HALFPENCE**



by
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Sequential page 965

JAMES ATLEE'S IMITATION BRITISH HALFPENCE

Gary A. Trudgen

The British halfpence was the most heavily counterfeited coin in the eighteenth century. Most of the counterfeiting was done in England, however, a small amount was also done in America. The majority of the American-made halfpence, as attributed by Robert Vlack in 1974, have been routinely credited to Thomas Machin's "Manufactory of Hardware". This includes all the varieties that are dated 1747, 1771, 1772, 1774, 1775, 1776, 1778, 1787 and 1788. In this article I intend to show that these imitation halfpence are indeed the product of James F. Atlee, Thomas Machin's partner and die engraver, however, all of the varieties were NOT struck at Machin's Mills.

Through die and punch linkage, the subject halfpence can be segregated into three distinct groups and a fourth catchall group. The four groups are illustrated graphically in the Appendix (CNL pages 973-979) together with enlargements of some typical coins within or associated with each of the groups. Within each group is shown the interconnection of each of the die varieties (1). [Notes begin on page 971]. The method of die variety linkage is stated where the varieties are not direct die combinations. The four groups are listed in chronological order -- meaning that Group 1 was the first to be minted and Group 4 the last.

GROUP 1

Within Group 1 there are two subgroups. Varieties 2-71A and 9-76B form a small subgroup, while the remainder of the varieties form the other larger subgroup.

The large subgroup, in addition to the die and date punch linkage, is made from the same letter punches. Several of these same letter punches (e.g. E, N, O, S, U and V) are also found on some CONSTELLATIO NOVA coppers (e.g. 1785 Crosby 3-B) and Walter Mould's infamous IMMUNE COLUMBIA die (2). The "S" punch is notably distinct. It has a large lower serif that points directly to its midsection. The midsection also bulges downward toward the lower serif.

The small subgroup, consisting of varieties 2-71A and 9-76B, uses several different letter punches that are not found in the large subgroup. These different letter punches are: C (handcut into a G), E, O, S and V. In this group, the "O" punch is particularly distinctive. It has a straight inside right sector. In addition to

the same letter punches, this small subgroup was made from the same obverse central device punch that Atlee later used at Machin's Mills to make Vermont dies (3). Significantly, this small subgroup is punch linked to James Atlee's 1786 Connecticut coppers (4). They share the same letter punches, and halfpence 9-76B uses the same date punches.

Halfpence variety 2-71A, of the small subgroup, is a very important coin. It is the link which ties the halfpence large subgroup to James Atlee. 2-71A is punch linked and style linked to both the halfpence large subgroup and to Atlee's 1786 Connecticut coppers. The punch linkage to Atlee's 1786 Connecticut coppers has already been noted. The large subgroup punch linkage to 2-71A exists through the date punches and letter punches A, B, P (hand cut into an R), and X. Also, a comparison of the reverse central device (Britannia, shield, and sprig) of halfpence 2-71A to halfpence 3-71B of the large subgroup and to 1786 Connecticut copper 3-D.1 shows the unmistakable style connection.

It now becomes apparent that James Atlee, while in New York City, was busy engraving the dies for the Group 1 halfpence before he cut the dies for his 1786 Connecticut coppers (5). The small subgroup, consisting of 2-71A and 9-76B, was probably the last halfpence die group to be made before Atlee started his 1786 Connecticut dies. To help support this conclusion there exists a 2-71A halfpence from the small subgroup struck over an 8-74A variety from the large subgroup. It is interesting to note that all of the dates used in the Group 1 halfpence were antedated to legitimate regal halfpence production except for the 1776 dated varieties. Since Atlee made these two varieties in 1786, he well knew that regal halfpence production had been halted in 1775. 1786 was the 10th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and Atlee may have made his two 1776 dated halfpence at this time in commemoration of this event.

Finally, the present conjecture that Machin's Mills obtained some of Walter Mould's letter punches and his IMMUNE COLUMBIA die in 1788 when Mould fled to Ohio to avoid debtor's prison (6), has been disproved. Instead, James Atlee must have obtained these items from Walter Mould in 1786 while they both were in New York City. This, of course, is shown by the fact that Atlee used several of Mould's letter punches in his Group 1 halfpence. Thus, when James Atlee became a partner in the Machin's Mills operation, he brought along Walter Mould's IMMUNE COLUMBIA die (7). Also, the extent of Walter Mould's involvement with the minting of the Group 1 halfpence is unknown. Did Atlee purchase Mould's punches and use them independently or was Mould somehow involved?

GROUP 2

James Atlee was employed by the New Jersey colners at the Rahway Mint from November 1786 up to June 1787 (8). On April 18, 1787 he joined Thomas Machin's new coining firm which wasn't to become operational until July 1, 1787 (9). Thus, from the time when the Rahway Mint closed (approximately June 1, 1787) until the time when Machin's Mills actually began operation, James Atlee was without facilities for engraving dies. It is during this time period that I believe the Group 2 halfpence were struck.

The six dies that comprise Group 2 were all made from the same date and letter punches. The "E" and "X" letter punches are very distinctive. None of these punches appear on Atlee's other products; however, these same date and letter punches are found elsewhere -- on the most glamorous of all American coins, the BRASHER DOUBLOON! Therefore, the Group 2 halfpence are also punch linked to the NOVA EBORAC, EXCELSIOR, and running horse (fox) NEW JERSEY coppers, which were engraved by John Bailey (10). Also, like these preceding coppers, the Group 2 halfpence were struck on planchets that were slightly smaller in diameter than the dies.

I believe that James Atlee and John Bailey jointly struck these halfpence in New York City while Atlee was waiting for Machin's Mills to become operational. The punches are Bailey's, but the central device punches (George III and Britannia) are Atlee's style, which he further developed while at Machin's Mills. It appears that James Atlee copied some of John Bailey's style characteristics from the NOVA EBORAC coppers. Some of these distinct characteristics appearing on the obverse central device are: pursed lips, almond shaped eyes, simplified bow, and later in Group 3, hair extending from a point at the back of the head.

GROUP 3

The halfpence varieties listed in Group 3 were struck at Machin's Mills from dies sunk by James Atlee. They were probably struck over a period of time starting during the second half of 1787 and ending sometime in 1788. They are die and punch linked to Connecticut and Vermont coppers that were struck at Machin's Mills (11). During this time period, James Atlee also sunk Vermont dies for the Rupert Mint and later, during this period, Connecticut and Vermont dies for use at Machin's Mills. (12).

A mixture of date and letter punches was used in sinking the Group 3 dies. A study of those die varieties which share the same punches suggests the following emission sequence:

- a. The 1787 varieties were fabricated first in the year of their date.
- b. The 1778 dated varieties were next and probably done in 1788.
- c. The 1788 dated variety was last and done in the year of its date.

This order of sequence is also supported by three other pieces of evidence which show that the 1778 and 1788 halfpence are closely tied to Machin's Mills produced State coppers and came after the 1787 dated varieties. First - several of the Machin's Mills Connecticut and Vermont coppers, that are similar in style to the halfpence, are punch linked to the 1778 and 1788 varieties (13). Second - for a period of time Machin's Mills was cutting their planchets with a planchet cutter that had a bad sector, which resulted in a distinct crimped rim burr after striking. One of the 1778 halfpence varieties (12-78B) and several Connecticut varieties are found made from planchets cut from the bad sector cutter (14), demonstrating that these varieties were struck during the same time period. Third - reverse die 87C was worn out from use with the 1787 dated varieties before it was combined with obverse die 23 (1788 dated variety) and Vermont R13, indicating that the 1787 dated varieties came first. (15).

Robert Viack, in his 1974 photoplates of "Early English Counterfeit Halfpence Struck in America", divided variety 21-87D into two sub-varieties (21-i-87D-i and 21-ii-87D-ii). Both sub-varieties were struck from the same pair of dies, however, the Type i variety has a very weak periphery from excessive radial expansion during striking. Since Machin's Mills never used a collar with their dies, the logical explanation is that a group of planchets were improperly annealed and were too soft when struck resulting in the 21-87D Type I sub-variety. Although not shown in Viack's photoplates, variety 18-87C can also be divided into two like sub-varieties. Once again, a group of planchets were too soft when struck with the variety 18-87C dies, resulting in a Type i or spread planchet coin of that variety. I estimate the rarity of the 18-87C spread planchet variety to be R7 on the Sheldon scale.

The 1778 dated varieties are obviously back dated to a non-regal halfpence date. It is conjectured that Thomas Machin may have requested Atlee to do this to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the placing of the Great Chain across the Hudson River at West Point. Machin, who supervised the construction and installation of the chain in 1778, was very proud of this great engineering feat.

GROUP 4

The die varieties listed in Group 4 are all mules or illogical die combinations which were struck at Machin's Mills probably during the copper price collapse in 1789. All three obverse dies are of George III and are punch linked through many of the same letter punches that were used to make the dies of the Group 1 halfpence small subgroup and Atlee's 1786 Connecticut coppers. Thus, these three obverse dies were engraved by Atlee in 1786 while he was in New York City and then carried by him to Machin's Mills.

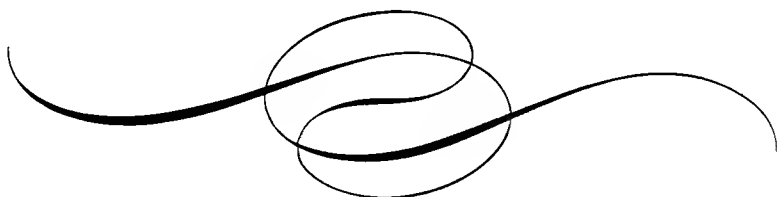
The reverse dies in this group come from various sources via James Atlee. As already noted, the 85NY die or IMMUNE COLUMBIA die was

obtained from Walter Mould in 1786 by Atlee. The 87NY or INDIAN die was engraved by Atlee and was used earlier to strike some pattern coinage (possibly at the Rahway, New Jersey mint) in conjunction with Thomas Machin's petition in March 1787 for a New York State coinage grant. The 88VT die (Bressett U) was engraved by Atlee for use by the Rupert, Vermont mint to coin Vermont coppers. When the Rupert mint closed, the die was returned to Machin's Mills where it was again used even though it was in a very worn condition (16).

Obverse 9 of Group 4 was previously used in 1786 (Group 1) to strike variety 9-76B. Very early during its use a fairly large chunk of the die broke off at the 12 o'clock position. As a result, several of the known seven specimens of variety 9-76B exhibit an obverse die cud above the bust of George III. Later, in 1789, when obverse 9 was used again, this time to strike variety 9-87NY, it was intentionally set in the coinage press so that the broken part of the die tilted away from the face of the reverse die (non-parallel dies). This was probably done in an effort to obtain greater life from the die by relieving the broken part of the die from some of the striking pressure. As a result, variety 9-87NY is virtually non-struck near the top of the obverse and on the opposite area of the reverse.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is indebted to Walter Breen for sharing his observation that the 1771 through 1776 (large date only) dated American-made British halfpence were made from some of Walter Mould's letter punches. Also, the hypothesis that James Atlee obtained Mould's non-New Jersey irons in 1786 while they were both in New York City, rather than Machin's Mills obtaining Mould's coining paraphernalia in 1788, was first advanced by Walter. I also wish to express my appreciation to Mike Ringo for critiquing this article and to the CNL Photofile for photographs of the coins that are illustrated in the article. All illustrations in the appendix are enlarged 1.5X.



NOTES

(1). Robert A. Vlack's Early English Counterfeit Halfpence Struck in America die variety attribution scheme is used on the four Group charts.

(2). Walter Mould was employed as a die sinker by George Wyon of Birmingham, England before he came to America. Wyon's mint made the CONSTELLATIO NOVA coppers and several speculative patterns. Mould brought with him several letter and number punches and the IMMUNE COLUMBIA die from Wyon's mint. -- Some of the large subgroup letter punches are also found on Wyon's CONFEDERATIO and IMMUNIS COLUMBIA coppers. In addition, the large number punches used on the 1786 IMMUNIS COLUMBIA copper with NEW JERSEY reverse are the same as some of the number punches used to make the large subgroup (e.g. Vlack 6-76A).

(3). Newman, Eric P., "A Recently Discovered Coin Solves a Vermont Numismatic Enigma", ANS Centennial Publication, 1958, pp.531-542.

(4). Breen, Walter, "Legal and Illegal Connecticut Mints, 1785-1789", ANS Studies on Money in Early America, 1976, pp.105-133. Atlee's 1786 Connecticut coppers are all mailed bust right coins that he engraved while he was in New York City: Miller 1-A, 2.1-A, 2.1-D.3, 2.2-D.2, 3-D.1, 3-D.4. -- Breen suggests that the last three varieties of the preceding die variety group may have been produced at the Rahway, New Jersey mint. He reasons that since William Coley copied variety 3-D.1 when he cut the Vermont Baby Head dies after the Rahway Mint had begun operations in November 1786 that these three Connecticut varieties were probably the last to be manufactured and struck at the Rahway Mint. I feel that this scenario is unlikely for a couple of reasons and that all of Atlee's 1786 Connecticut coppers were struck in New York City before he began work at the Rahway Mint. First, it is very improbable that the legally established Rahway Mint would begin operations by striking counterfeit Connecticut coppers. Second, variety 3-D.1 was probably one of the first varieties struck, instead of the last, because it is closely tied in style to the later Group 1 halfpence issues.

(5). This emission sequence is based upon the fact that Atlee's 1786 Connecticut coppers and halfpence small subgroup are punch linked to his 1786 New Jersey coppers with coulter. The New Jersey coppers were made at the Rahway Mint starting in November 1786, while Atlee's 1786 Connecticut coppers were made earlier that year, perhaps starting in the spring. The halfpence large subgroup is punch linked to the small subgroup and Atlee's 1786 Connecticuts, but not to the New Jersey coppers, indicating that the Group 1 halfpence came before the Connecticut coppers.

(6). Breen, Walter, "Legal and Illegal Connecticut Mints, 1785-1789", p. 111. Walter Mould defaulted on debts owed to Matthias Ogden as surety in the original New Jersey partnership.

(7). I believe the IMMUNE COLUMBIA die was obtained by Atlee in 1786, but not used until the final days of Machin's Mills. Then, it was combined with two poorly-prepared dies, GEORGIVS III REX (Vlack 15-85NY) and VERMON AUCTORI (Ryder 1; Bressett 26-Z), probably during the period of the copper price collapse in 1789. It is difficult to analyze the letter punches of the coppers struck from these two poorly-prepared dies. However, it appears that the GEORGIVS III REX die was made during 1786 in New York City and then carried to Machin's Mills by Atlee, while the VERMON AUCTORI die was made at Machin's Mills.

(8). Breen, Walter, "The New York Immunis: A Mystery Unraveled", The Colonial Newsletter, April 1979, pp. 668-676.

(9). Crosby, Sylvester, "The Early Coins of America", 1875, pp. 198-199. The articles of agreement (June 7, 1787) between Machin's Mills and Reuben Harmon's Vermont Mint states that Machin's Mills "shall on or before the said first day of July next complete at their own proper cost and charges the works now erecting at the mills of the said Thomas Machin near the Great Pond in the County of Ulster."

(10). Breen, Walter, "Brasher & Bailey: Pioneer New York Coiners, 1787-1792", ANS Centennial Publication, 1958, pp. 137-145.

(11). The Group 3 chart shows the Connecticut and Vermont die linkage. The obverse 13 Vermont mule is a recent discovery and has been designated 13-88VTA to be consistent with Robert Vlack's attribution scheme. Good examples of Connecticut and Vermont punch linked coppers are 1788 Connecticut Miller 9-E and 1788 Vermont Ryder 27.

The Massachusetts cent varieties that are recognized as contemporary counterfeits are also punch linked to the Group 3 halfpence. A good example is Massachusetts cent reverse die I which was made with the same date punches that were used to make halfpence reverse die 87C. This little known connection is yet to be studied and published.

(12). The Vermont dies during this time were Ryder 13 & 27.

(13). For example: Connecticut coppers 1787 Miller 3-G.1; 1788 Miller 2-D & 9-E, and Vermont coppers Ryder 13 & 27.

(14). All of the 12-78B halfpence that I have examined have exhibited the crimped rim burr. I've seen this same distinct crimped rim burr on Connecticut varieties 1787 Miller 13-D; 1788 Miller 2-D, 11-G & 16.1-D. There are probably others.

(15) Die wear or the increasing weakening of the legend and date of reverse die 87C can be observed as it was combined with the various obverse dies. Study of this suggests an emission sequence of : 20-87C, 19-87C, 18-87C, 21-II-87C, 23-87C, and VT-87C.

(16) Bressett, Kenneth E., "Vermont Copper Coinage", ANS Studies on Money in Early America, Pages 173-198, 1976.

APPENDIX

JAMES ATLEE'S IMITATION BRITISH HALFPENCE

The four groups of James Atlee's halfpence account for all but four of the die combinations that Robert Vlack attributed as American-made in his 1974 photoplates. These remaining four halfpence are neither die, punch, or style linked to Atlee's halfpence. These are the die combinations 10-77A, 14-84A, 16-86A, and CT-86A. Of these four halfpence, only combinations 16-86A and CT-86A are interconnected.

Extant specimens of the very rare (R8) 1777 dated die combination 10-77A are poorly struck from non-parallel dies. This variety was probably attributed as American-made because of the single outline in the crosses (British Union) of Britannia's shield. The British Union should have a double outline to be technically correct. The single outline design style was used by James Atlee. However, as previously noted, this variety does not exhibit his engraving style or any of the punches that were used to make his four groups of halfpence.

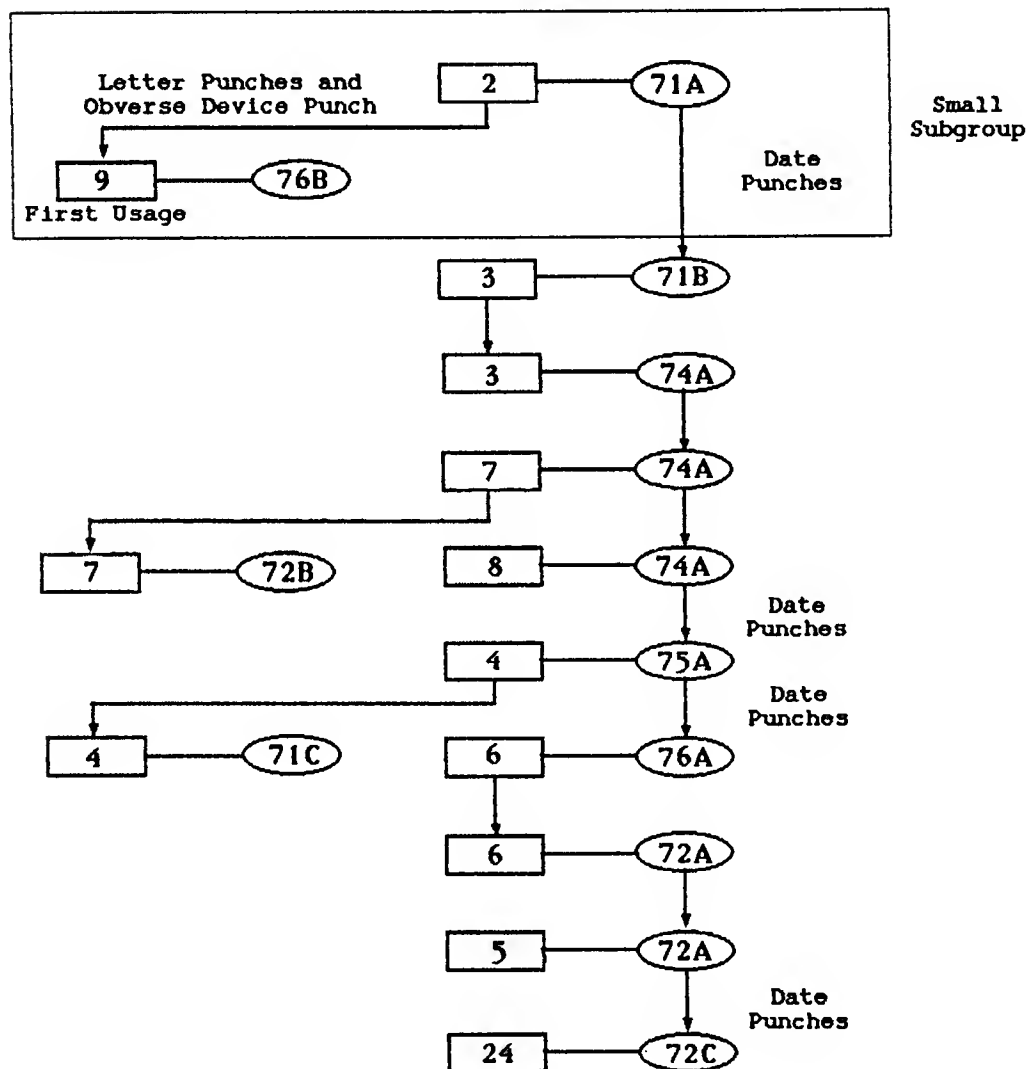
Eric P. Newman has concluded that the 1784 dated die combination 14-84A was most likely made by the alleged mint located at North Swansea, Massachusetts ("American Circulation of English and Bungtown Halfpence" in Studies on Money in Early America, A.N.S., 1976). This R6 rarity halfpence is found weakly struck on planchets of poorly refined copper. The planchets are wide (28mm) and thin (typical weight is 100 grains). D.T.Batty in his four volume catalogue of the copper coinage of Great Britain, compiled during the years 1868-1898, designates this halfpence as number 3826.

The very rare 1786 dated die combinations 16-86A and CT-86A are linked together through their reverse die. The workmanship on all three dies is extremely crude. The Connecticut legend AUCTORI CONNEC is found on obverse CT, which accounts for assigning these two varieties as American-made. Also, supporting the American-made conclusion, the style of the hair and wreath of the bust of obverse CT is very similar to that of the 1785 Connecticut copper known as the African Head (Miller 4.1-F.4). Variety CT-86A also belongs to an extremely rude group of five 1786 dated Connecticut coppers. This group which was obviously engraved by the same individual also includes Miller/Barnsley designations 2.3-T, 2.4-U, and 2.5-V.

In the diagrams of the four groups which follow, obverses are designated by rectangles and reverses by ovals. Variety attributions are those developed by Robert A. Vlack and published in his 1974 photographic plates. Additional designations for various mulings of dies are given in parenthesis and are Miller for Connecticut and Ryder for Vermont. The ligatures are of two types -- a plain connecting line represents conventional die linkage while a line with arrowhead indicates (a) a graphic repetition of the same die variety or (b) different die varieties having common characteristics, as stated, such as letter or date punches, etc.

GROUP 1

Made in New York City in 1786
from dies engraved by
James Atlee



Photographs of typical specimens and related specimens
for each group are shown on the following pages.





2-71A

3-71B



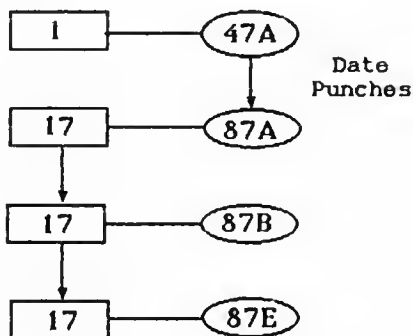
9-76B

Connecticut
Miller 3-D.1 of 1786



GROUP 2

Made in New York City by
Atlee and Bailey in the
spring/summer of 1787



This group is punch linked to the
Brasher Doubloon, Excelsiors, Nova Eboracs,
and running horse New Jersey coppers.



1787 Brasher Doubloon



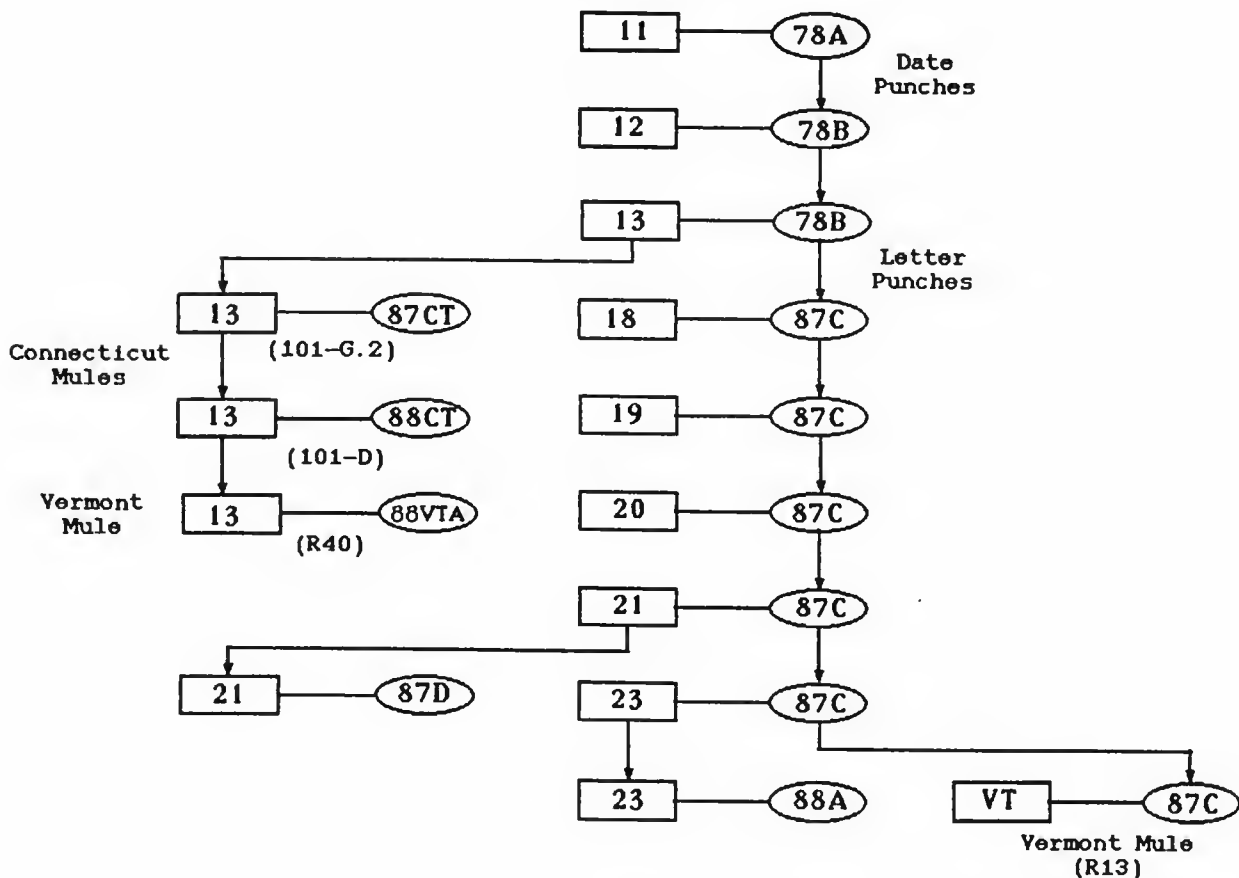
1787 NOVA EBORAC



17-87A

GROUP 3

Made at Machin's Mills in
the second half of 1787 and
into 1788 from dies
engraved by James Atlee



Vermont Ryder 27 (of 1788)
See Notes 11, 12 & 13, page 972



12-78B

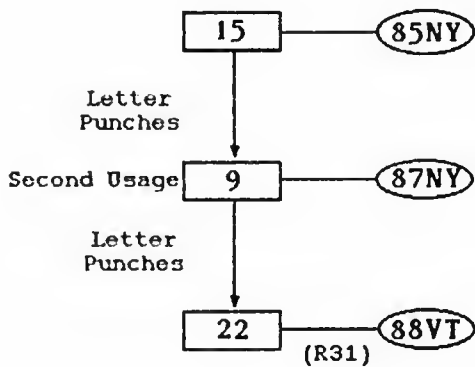
23-88A



Connecticut
Miller 9-E of 1788

GROUP 4

Struck at Machin's Mills
probably during the 2nd quarter
of 1789



22-88VT



15-85NY



9-87NY

**More on "An ILLUSTRATION of a RHODE ISLAND
SHIP TOKEN in a 1785 Japanese Book."**

(G-2A)

- **from Michael J. Hodder
Wolfeboro, New Hampshire**

The appearance of a 1778-1779 Rhode Island Ship Token/Medal in the Seiyo Sempu (ca. 1785, Kyoto; cf. Gleanings 2, CNL 10/76) is intriguing, not only because it is the earliest known mention of the piece. Interested readers may refer to the reproduction of the woodcut in the cited reference. (See CNL Sequential page 570, JCS).

Reading Japanese style, the first coin on the right is a copper half stuiver, dated 1644 but struck 1644-45 by the Dutch East Indies Company intended for circulation in Batavia, Ceylon, and Malacca as an emergency issue. The second piece is our Rhode Island specimen, variety with "vlugtende" removed from the die or scraped from the coin. The third is a "tin" bazaruco, undated but struck after 1724 by the Company for circulation along the Malabar coast. Translations of the Japanese text accompanying the drawings was done through the kindness of Mrs. Rose Chan Houston, Associate Curator of Far Eastern Coins at the American Numismatic Society. The text gives the weights and diameter of each specimen; the given figures have proven to be accurate measurements, falling within expected norms, and suggest that the author of the handbook, Shoen Shujin, worked from actual specimens or drew on the work of someone who had held the coins. Each specimen pictured in the woodcut has a headnote above it. The first, again, from the right, reads "The same (as the preceding coin on the page before); copper coin." The second reads "The same; the same." The third reads "The same; lead coin." In its first appearance "The same" refers to the heading of the section of the catalog in which these three pieces are featured. Presumably, it reads something like "Coins of the Foreigners Resident in Deshima." When the character "Do" (= ditto, the same) is repeated twice over the Rhode Island piece the reading of 'same class as the preceding coin; copper coin' is meant to be understood. Thus, to the Japanese author of the late 18th century catalog of European coins, the Rhode Island piece was a copper coin of the same class as two coins struck earlier by the Dutch East Indies Company.

This is not to suggest that the Rhode Island piece, be it medal or token, was struck by the Company, but the Dutch context is clear in the woodcut. It should also be remembered that Japan was a closed society when Shoen Shujin compiled his catalog of European coins. Foreign coins entered Japan (for collectors, not for circulation) only through Chinese merchant traders licensed by the Shogunate, through clandestine trade with the Dutch, occasionally with the English, in the Ryuku Islands (Okinawa, etc.), or through the Dutch factory on Deshima Island in Nagasaki Bay. Thus, of the three likely sources for foreign coins in late 18th century Japan, two were Dutch in origin.

None of the coins in the woodcut are rare. The first is listed by C. Scholten as scarce (The Coins of the Dutch Overseas Territories, 1601-1948); I estimate the Rhode Island piece to be R-4 on Don Taxay's rarity scale; Scholten considered the third to be common. The third certainty, and probably the first, could still be found in circulation in Dutch East Indies Company territory in 1785. Even if not still part of the currency medium, there would have been little difficulty obtaining coins that are not scarce some two hundred years closer to the time of their manufacture. The appearance of the Rhode Island piece in a catalog dated about six years after 1779 is suggestive. The time lag is too short to allow for it to reach Japan through random patterns of circulation. Given the sailing time, and need to wait for monsoon winds in the Arabian Sea, the time lag between the putative date of striking, 1779, and the date of the Seiyo Sempu, ca. 1785, is reduced even more, perhaps as much as a full year.

It seems that the Rhode Island specimen pictured by Shoen Shujin reached Japan in the hands of someone who obtained it no more than six, probably no more than five, years after its assumed date of manufacture. Historical evidence suggests that person was Dutch, at least in the employ of the United East India Company. The author of the Kyoto catalog of foreign coins considered it to be in the same class as two coins struck by the Company, further suggesting a strong Dutch connection.

Numismatic mythology to the contrary, the legends on the Rhode Island piece are in perfectly good Dutch for the time. Rhode Island is spelled phonetically, if incorrectly, suggesting a maker unfamiliar with the spelling accepted in 1779; but the sentence structure and the rest of the orthography is correct for a reasonably educated Dutch speaker of the late 18th century. The word "vlugtende" (= escaping) plainly was not meant to appear on the "obverse," beneath Admiral Howe's flagship, as it was either gouged off, overpunched with a wreath, or removed from the die finally. General Clinton did not evacuate Rhode Island until October 11, 1779 and the furled sails on Howe's flagship suggest anchorage and not flight. It is possible that "vlugtende" on the "obverse" was a die-sinker's error; certainly the manufacturer of the piece tried different ways to obliterate the word, and only one specimen is known to survive with the word unaltered on the coin. General Sullivan's failure to take Newport and Admiral d'Estaing's forced withdrawal to Boston after the storm of August 10/11, 1778 were serious setbacks for the American cause. General Clinton's withdrawal from Rhode Island led to the capture of 5,400 American troops and the recovery of South Carolina and the important colonial port of Charleston for the Crown in May of the following year. Withdrawing from Rhode Island was part of the British "southern strategy" and was hardly a defeat for the British arms. Howe's furled sails proclaim possession, not eviction. The Rhode Island piece is not anti-British satire; rather, it is pro-British propaganda appropriate to the time, almost certainly of Dutch origin, struck before the Treaty of Armed Neutrality made the Netherlands a de facto enemy of Britain in December 1780.